

THE PALACE MONASTERY IN PRES LAV

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Excavated and investigated during more than ten archaeological seasons, this largest and most richly monastery complex among the eight hitherto known in Preslav is situated some 500-600 metres to the northwest of the king's palaces in the Manastira area and covers around 25 decares of the surface of an extensive terrace inclined from the east to the west on the eastern slopes of the high hill called Zabouite. When choosing a place for the complex, the builders were attracted by this terrace because of some advantages of it. Its proximity to the Interior city and the king's palace, as well as the fact that the Zabouite were sheltered from the northwestern winds, turned out to be especially decisive. There is a wonderful view to the south - to the rolling ridges and folds of the Preslav mountain and to the east - to the valley of the Ticha (Kamchiya) river coming out of the Varbitsa gorge. Ages ago the panorama included the stern stone silhouettes of several basilicas of Prince Boris I which were erected in this eastern part of the capital.

In order to estimate the advantages of the site, one should not forget the excellent visibility of the terrace from all suburban districts and from complexes in the capital and its more distant environs. Especially colourful was the impression of the monastery complex placed on it when viewed from the Patleyna hills and from the suburban monasteries situated on the Touzlalaka, Avradaka and Pod Valkashina high eastern terraces. Having wonderful compatibility with the peculiarities of the hilly terrain, the defence structures, the animated shapes of the palaces and the balanced proportions of the numerous cross-in-dome churches, the Palace monastery stood out as one of the interesting accents in the already completed urban planning structure of King Symeon's capital city.

In spite of the proximity to the Interior city and the palaces and the positive availability of some buildings proven by several bulges of the terrain on the terrace, no systematic archaeological investigations had been carried out in this northwestern part of Preslav until our excavations for unearthing the complex in 1969. That is why this monastery which is remarkable in many aspects remained unknown to the researchers of RAIC (the Russian Archaeological Institute in Constantinople) who worked in Preslav at the beginning of this century, and it remained beyond the attention of the members of the Archaeological Institute group charged with carrying out the Preslav field investigations after 1944.

The first information on the monastery complex is provided by K. Shkorpil who in his essay on Preslav mentioned the Manastira area place names preserved among the local population and specified with great certainty its situation on the plan enclosed with the text. This northwestern part of the Exterior city with its several terraces on the slope of the Zabouite attracted very early the attention of the tireless local researcher of the Preslav past J.

Gospodinov as well. Like Shkorpil he never began excavations to unearth and study the monuments left here. It should be noted though, that in a report to the local Ticha archaeological society after information on Byzantine coins and a lead seal found here and handed over to him, Gospodinov states that „...it is imperative to make excavations in this area close to the palace and the western fortress wall of the Interior city“. In 1928, after the still audible echo raised by the discovery of the famous Round (Golden) church, in a report on the same topic he again expressed his intention to the society's leadership to begin excavations in the Manastira area. After this report nothing was heard about Gospodinov's intentions to carry out field investigations in this sector of the Exterior city and it is hard to say anything specific on the motives which made him postpone twice the implementation of this intention of his. It is quite possible that, like V. Ivanova-Mavrodinova who was a long-term leader of the excavations in Preslav after 1944, Gospodinov reached the conclusion that the monuments within the city walls should be unearthed after studying the monuments in the close and farther vicinity of the capital threatened by defacement and destruction.

As a result of the systematic archaeological excavations from 1969 till 1981, the Palace monastery was entirely excavated and it provided opportunity to reach conclusions not only on its ecclesiastical and secular buildings but on the production-orientated ones and on the yard spaces enclosed by the monastery fence too. The information on their situation following the excavations from the north to the south is as follows. The northern half of the terrace is filled by the foundations and walls of the ground floors of the long and straight buildings of the monastery which, together with segments of the eastern and southern stretch of the fence wall, close the rectangular space of the first (earliest) monastery yard. On its area of 7 500 m² rose the central monastery church situated almost in the middle of its high western half together with two buildings whose foundations are based on the multistage surface of the platform with the church: the first one is to the east near the monastery fence and the second one to the north. With its chain plan and an isolated wall heading southwards they divide the space into four yard areas different in size. The northwestern one is the smallest. It includes not only an underground tomb (crypt) for the mortal remains of the monastery brethren adjoining the whole northern face of the church but the bulk of graves of the monastery necropolis, the continuous stylobate on which rested the columns of the portico, and the bays in front of some monastery rooms to the north and the west, several platforms covered with the slabs of the yard stone pavement, drains for leading rain water and the very defaced traces of the foundations and the equipment of a glass workshop. The southwestern yard quarter is almost of identical size. The small monastery church was erected here which at the next stage of the development of complex is connected to the west with the new abbot's house, several farm and storehouse buildings and shelters along the wall of the monastery fence to the south and west. Trough its unbuilt part, as in other sectors of the monastery yard, passed water-mains, drains etc. connected with the life, farm and production activities of the inhabitants. It is also important that to the north this part of the yard was isolated from the large monastery church by a

stone wall. Close to the southern wall of the fence one comes across two large rectangular platforms for stirring mortar. The northeastern yard area, although larger, is almost entirely unbuilt. The eastern fence wall is connected to the only edifice here which follows a north-south direction. Barring the western part of the room inserted into the southeastern corner of a long building, the monastery fountain, the two stone tombs, the clay water-mains, the few fireplaces and the traces of temporary light shelters for some production activities, no other structures were erected in the largest, southeastern yard quarter. As regards the fact that it was unbuilt one should not forget that the monastery door securing access of the guests and the visitors to the monastery complex was situated on the fence closing it from the east.

Two more yards - southern and eastern - are formed on the southern and eastern extension of the terrace with the first monastery yard. Foundations and walls of nearly fifty rooms of different size which are grouped in five long chain-plan buildings rise in the southern one covering an area of almost 10 decares. Length-wise three of them are orientated northwards-southwards and two - eastwards-westwards. Thus situated, they close among themselves three yard fields which are not equally large. The western one is especially spacious and covers an area as large as the rest - the central and eastern ones. Of the stone slabs which once paved them only several ones have remained on the spot in the central field. There again and in the northwestern corner of the western field one can see the bases of seven pillars built of stone and situated in a row. The functional dependence between the buildings and the yards is proven not only by the interior entrances and the built two-chamber kilns in some rooms but also by the waste pits discovered in several places during the investigations and filled with a large amount of discarded materials from the diverse and vigorous artistic activities exercised by the members of the brotherhood.

The yard on the eastern extension of the terrace is limited on three sides by the wall of the monastery fence and covers a space of some 4 000 m². The fact that it is not built up and the several ceramic kilns discovered at its northern end suggest that on the one hand it was connected with baking the ceramic production of the monastery studios and on the other hand - with the stay of the numerous visitors and guests who came from afar for the feast day of the monastery.

The observations of the excavations with the materials discovered by them throw light on the building history and the place of the complex in the varied life of Preslav. Built mainly in two stages during the period of the late 9th c. and the first quarter of the 10th c. it was subjected to a number of reconstructions as well. Its doubtless territorial connection with the king's palace was achieved through a slab-covered road from the east whose full length is not yet unearthed.

While elucidating the depth and the character of the multistage platform with the foundations of the small (second) church and carrying out drilling probes of the stratigraphic picture in two spots of the southern yard were discovered traces of buildings which chronologically precede the erection of the monastery on the terrace. They are not really impressive and their chronological

specification is most convincingly proved by some reused limestone blocks in the foundations of the church platform mentioned and the isolated stone foundation which was discovered while clarifying the building history of the monastery abbot's house. It is hard to say anything in particular about the building which has not survived up to now. But it is abundantly clear that it was not connected with the monastery structures on this southern part of the terrace. Today when our knowledge of the buildings on it is exhausted only by the monastery buildings and those in its immediate vicinity to the east, it is risky to put forward speedy suggestions. Especially important here is the fact that people have actively lived on this territory near the palace district during the precapital pagan period of Preslav. In this situation the possibility that the Palace monastery complex appeared within the estate precincts of a boyar close to the palace is not groundless. Along these lines there is a real possibility of recovering more information from the terrain yet archaeologically unexhausted between the western fortress wall of the Interior city and the monastery.

Excluding several light structures and temporary shelters, it can be claimed that there are not any ecclesiastical and monumental buildings of the complex built later than the mid-9th c. The reconstructions of some of the chain-plan buildings in the southern half of the monastery are dated after that. It is a pity that the long-term hand and machine cultivation of the terrace have deprived us of a narrower chronological estimate of the buildings. Due to the same factors are lacking materials from the excavations which could serve as a firmer orientation regarding the time and the reasons for ending the life in the monastery. It is hard to make conclusions about the losses incurred from the evidence of Leo the Deacon about the invasion of John Tzimiskes (969-976) into the capital of the Bulgarians. While in some of the suburban monasteries this event in 971 was accompanied by conflagrations which left significant traces of wood ash, embers, unburnt beams etc., it should be said that nothing of this sort was found anywhere on the vast territory of the Palace monastery. Of course, this does not mean that in the new state and political situation during the years of Byzantine domination the life of this monastery close to the palace continued as before. The absence of information from the excavations about violent and severe destruction, about burning its buildings makes clear that life in this monastery remarkable in every respect was discontinued as a result of its abandonment. It is difficult to say whether the depopulation took place suddenly or gradually. When the Pechenegs became rulers of the area south of the Danube in the 11th c. followed by the Uzoi and the Comans, it was totally deserted. It seems that some of the monastery buildings were then subjected to pillage and demolition. The latter is proved by the two burials discovered during the excavations: the first one in the corridor of the monastery crypt and the second one to the north of the apse of the large monastery church whose non-Christian orientation, horse skeleton and fragmented clay cauldron with inside handles enable's one to specify them as Pechenegian.

During the years of the second Bulgarian kingdom life in Preslav, although limited to the bounds of the Interior city, went on rather actively.

Probably then were made some reconstructions of the buildings to the southwest of the small church. Fragments of two ceramic vessels with sgraffito decoration and coins of Constantine Assen (1257-1277) found during the excavations of this southern half of the complex are the only materials which show more definitely that some of its structures were again inhabited. It is impossible to point out more details about the life and activities of its new dwellers after a hiatus of two centuries because of the cultivation of the terrace by its former owners and farmers.

This is the rough picture of the situation of the complex, the grouping of its buildings and yards, and the time of its appearance and desolation. Especially important for the aspect of life going on behind the monastery fence are the occupations of its inhabitants. The observations and materials about them coming in from the excavations are quite a few and enable one to take a look with great certainty at its representative northern half with the church centre and also at the production area with the numerous monastery workshops and studios on the southern extension of the monastery terrace.

The grouping of the buildings in the monastery complex around these two centres to the north and south of its three-dimensional composition was dictated not so much by particular architectural volumes and their situation but most of all by the character of the occupations in its two halves. The brethren of the northern monastery sector along with their religious devotions spent their time in assiduous literary and teaching work, on which nothing concrete can be provided by the building of the monastery scriptorium which is hard to identify and the monastery library whose foundation's plan has only survived. Things stand better in this respect with the activities in the southern monastery half where the character of everyday work and occupations of the monks are attested to, along with the materials found, by some preserved production equipment in the monastery workshops and studios grouped on the southern terrace.

Against the background of the total cultural upsurge which included all aspects and sections of the manifestations of Old Bulgarian culture during the time of King Symeon I's reign (893-927) the building of libraries at some of the rich capital monasteries is quite normal. Not only church services were taken care of but the need of books (translated and original) was rather early realized and the care to provide, translate, copy and decorate them was state policy. The great love of books of King Symeon I himself witnessed by the written sources and the considerable literary production of the writers around him were a real precondition for building special library buildings, especially in such a richly constructed monumental complex as the Palace monastery. One can only express suggestions as to what these buildings looked like. And if we can assess the literary treasures kept in them by the later copies which have survived, it is hard to hope that some of the Preslav libraries can be definitely ascertained among the strongly defaced Preslav structures which have survived only by their foundation's plans. The absence of local information for buildings of this function makes it imperative to look for comparisons with libraries outside Bulgaria. But it should be acknowledged that the examples there are a few. Of special interest are some

monastery libraries in Armenia. Bearing in mind the proximity between the monumental architecture of Pliska, Preslav and Armenia pointed out by some Bulgarian and foreign scientists in the respect which interests us, we can look for some links with a square plan building of the suburban monastery in the Touzlalaka area which we think was the abbot's house.

It seems that in the monastery complex the building to the north of the central monastery church served as a library. Its longitudinal axis is orientated crosswise to the church and its outward size is 20 x 7 m. Very little has survived of the walls of the 0,80 m deep foundations of the building. The mound which filled in its interior produced materials which show that limestone blocks had been used in building its walls as in the two monastery churches. One could enter it most probably by an entrance on the short southern wall and by the southern end of the long eastern facade, in which a room is formed sized 3 x 4,5 m. At a 2,20 m distance from the western facade are preserved in their places five limestone bases of square form and a shaped round torus for the colonade of a portico. It is interesting that with its portico the building faces the room interior of the western wing of the monastery complex. A corridor passed above the portico with a bay in the 16 m long unsophisticated interior of the storey. The ladder leading to it was originally accommodated in the antechamber of the ground floor to the south. It seems that during the extension connected with the formation of the monastery church centre the ladder disappeared from the antechamber which suited other purposes and a small square room was built for it in the southeastern corner of the former antechamber.

Until the construction of the underground funerary edifice with the chapel above it the building of the library was connected by its portico to the main monastery church and some of the rooms on the ground and upper floors in two of the wings of the monastery complex. With its other long side being the eastern one, it was turned to the western and northern sides of the low one-storey buildings of the monastery refectory. The portico and the bay of the building deliberately faced westwards, as it seems. The precious parchment rolls and codices were kept, as in Armenia, in niches formed in the walls of the floors.

It can be suggested with some confidence that the monastery scriptorium was arranged in the simple spacious interior of the ground floor with the bay passing in front of it. The broken painted ceramic tiles which were found in the mound on the ground floor cut through by later canals and water mains relate to ceramic panels mounted on one-time walls. Most numerous are the specimens of rectangular form filled in with an arched border motive which is most frequent. It seems that the tiles framed wall ceramic compositions whose character can not be guessed at today. There are a few tiles as well filled in with Greek letters painted with brown outline. Their fragmented condition does not enable one to say whether they are names of saints and martyrs of ceramic icons which were found in the ceramic studio on the southern terrace. Their discovery here is not by chance and elucidates the connections between the artists-illustrators of the scriptorium in the library and work of the painters of the monastery studio for painted ceramics.

The investigations here produced also two Byzantine lead seals for affixing on documents and letters sent to the monastery. One of them belongs to Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (913-959) and throws light on the contacts of the monastery with the emperor's palace in Constantinople. The storing of the correspondence in the building of the monastery library is altogether justified.

More information on the work of the brethren has come to us from the southern half of the monastery complex. Here, over an area of more than 10 decares, rose about fifty rooms grouped in the chain-plan wings of six long buildings. The production equipment investigated in them and the materials found during the excavations enable one to elucidate the picture of the crafts done by the brethren and their achievements in the field of monumental and applied art. It is impossible to consider in a single article the numerous materials and all craft and artistic technologies which were used in the monastery. After mentioning the flourishing of applied sculpture, decorative ceramics, artistic bone carving, metalwork and glass-making we will pay attention to the work of the monastery ceramists. Our choice is dictated not only by their great successes in dealing with white clay but also by the close links which the artists-ceramists kept with the brethren of the library and the scriptorium in the northern half of the monastery complex.

The painted ceramics studio was arranged in a vast two-part building whose longitudinal axis was orientated eastwards-westwards. With its simple southern facade the latter closed the isolated monastery complex in the southern end of the terrace. Its western part is sized 31 x 5,20 m. From the southeast its western extension enters by some 10 m the space of the interior monastery yard. The unsophisticated interior enables one to look for the function of the building in two directions: for production which does not contradict the information received on the character of this vast production complex of the monastery, and for storage to keep the expensive production of some workshops and studios. The former function is confirmed by the clay pit (shaft) for white clay built of large format rectangular bricks and the latter one - by the proximity to the interior of the complex and the diverse ceramic material found during the clearing out.

The second (eastern) part of the building begins after a passage of 3 m between the short sides. Through this passage one could walk from the north to the south. During one of the reconstructions the space of the passage was closed and formed a narrow room, in which a ladder for reaching the floor was put (built). The availability of an upper storey is proved by the deep foundations of the whole building which stand on a mortar layer cut through by a thick network of pylons and by the multistage footing of the long and short walls. No differences between the material and construction manner of both parts of the building are observed. The space which is 22 m long includes two rooms sized 8,50 x 5 m and 12,50 x 5 m. The mound filling them in was characterized by red-burnt building debris containing a large amount of plaster lumps and building ceramics (bricks and roof-tiles, some of which are incised with ipsilons flanked by vertical strokes - IYI). In the northern half of both rooms the bricks were discovered laid in rows on one of their narrow sides like a brick wall pulled down or rather „spilled“ from

the outside inwards. The layer was abundant in fragmented Old Bulgarian vessels which were glazed and unglazed, pieces of painted decorative and table ceramics, glass and iron slag, unburnt embers and grey wood ash. Everything suggested that life in this part of the building was connected with production, for which fire was needed. This was also confirmed by the results after the total removal of the mound nearly 1 m thick. A rectangular platform appeared in the larger eastern room over the surface of the rammed clay floor. Built of small cobbles and crushed stones with alternating rows of clay it is redburnt owing to the constant burning on it. Near the western distributing wall of the room was discovered a stone-built pit (clay shaft), in which were preserved lumps of refined white clay ready for moulding. Fingerprints of some of the monastery ceramists of that time were present on two lumps. On the platform of the kiln and around it were found fragments of more than ten painted table vessels. Especially interesting are the pieces of a small painted pitcher with images of hunting scenes of its walls framed in festooned medallions. The completely finished although fragmented ceramic production definitely points to the conclusion that the room was intended for its baking. Only other observations and data on the technological processes conducted here are lacking. The kiln was raised on the rectangular platform and no information has survived about its construction with the baking of the ceramic ware are of interest the glassy drops of transparent glaze on two flat stones of the platform.

The same situation could be observed in the second room after the taking down of the mound. The couple of kilns excavated - rectangular and round - have reached us strongly defaced by the floor of their hot chamber. To the round kiln was discovered a pit (ash shaft) dug into the platform floor which was filled in with grey wood ash and unburnt embers. The ceramic materials found near the kilns very definitively confirm that both were connected with the baking of decorative ceramics. It can only be regretted that no more information has survived regarding the make-up of the kilns.

Compared with the other Preslav studios for painted ceramics, the building of the ceramists of the Palace monastery stands out with its vast size - over 50 m long and 5 m width. As regards the production operations and the technology of this artistic production, the studio was divided into two parts. The white clay ready for moulding was kept in the western one which is larger. On the brick floor of the excavated large shaft were left several lumps of the raw material of this production - refined white clay of high plastic qualities. After its digging out in the immediate vicinity of the capital it was carried to the area of the outer northeastern yard of the monastery complex where it was subjected to washing out (refinement). In the western part of the studio not only decorative tiles and table vessels were moulded but the painted and embossed decoration was laid on and glazing was made.

The second half of the studio has a narrow antechamber formed in one of the rooms of the eastern building in the production complex on the southern terrace. As it was earlier said, the kilns for baking the production were installed here. Close to the kilns to the north of the room we chanced upon two deep pits

for thrown out discarded production. Their cleaning produced extremely important observations and finds for the Preslav ceramic icon painting. There are reasons to insist that the baking of table painted vessels was carried out in the western room while in the eastern one were baked tiles for wall ceramic decoration, ceramic icons, columns, arches and other details connected with the construction of church icon-stand screens.

The building of the studio had an upper floor over its western part. It was reached by a ladder inserted into the additionally built room in place of the former passage left for walking between the two halves of the ceramic studio. A serious obstacle for the existence of a floor over its eastern half were the baking kilns. No traces were found of any equipment on the floor of the building. But it is quite certain that in front of the southern half of its western part passed a portico, on whose pillars over the floor was formed a wooden balcony. The many changes mentioned in the description of this section of the monastery have deprived us of the opportunity to assess more definitely the proper place of the colonnade and the treatment of the southern facade. It is quite natural and expected in connection with the continuous implementation of the sophisticated ceramic technology and the risks incurred in its baking that living and sleeping space was ensured for the monastery ceramists next to the production quarters.

As a compensation for the bad state of preservation of the monastery studio with its kilns and equipment are the numerous and various finds and materials enlightening not only the production basis of this artistic work but our knowledge of its style and ornamental richness. The abilities of the monastery ceramists are equally evident in both parts of the painted ceramic production: architectural decoration (wall revetment, details for inlay, frames, columns, arches for the decoration of altar screens etc.) and table ceramics (dishes, cups, pitchers etc.). Their mastership as painters is eloquently testified by the diverse ornamental motives and the images of birds, lions, griffins, senmourves (dogs-birds) etc. They are characterized not only as masters experienced in white clay processing but as creators having elegant taste and original ideas and decisions.

Especially numerous are the materials of the studio connected with the rise and development of Preslav ceramic icon painting. The making of ceramic icons in it was entrusted to masters who possessed not only technological experience, drawing abilities, taste for the colour composition of the also deeper erudition about the Christian religion and its religious pictorial system. The painters had to follow the canon - the iconographical rules which dictated the composition, the type of figures and the basis of their colour palette. The materials found show that the ceramists of the Palace monastery were well acquainted with the church dogmatics and the principles of the new faith, as well as with the early examples of Christian art made in Palestine, Syria, Egypt, Asia Minor and Constantinople.

Extremely important are some new materials which widen the familiar scheme of the old scientists developed on the basis of a few and ill preserved ceramic icon images. Here, along with the medallions known from the Round church with bust effigies of archangels and saints and with the rectangular icons

of full-length saints and martyrs from the monastery studio in Patleyna, hitherto unknown varieties were made as well. Of justified interest in this respect are the small icon images represented on tiles with rounded arch-like upper ends. Their mutual functional link with the painted ceramic columns and Π -shaped arches made at the studio enable one to pinpoint definitely their place in the church interior and in forming the decoration on the altar icon-stand screens in some of the richly built capital churches of the 9th-10th century.

The iconographical repertoire of the ceramists of the Palace monastery included, together with early images of the Syro-Palestinian sphere, subjects inspired by the Byzantine churches and the Byzantine manuscripts richly illustrated with miniatures of the 9th-10th century. This fact is confirmed by two remarkable icons: one of Virgin Mary with the Child Jesus and one of a saint (Christ?) enthroned. The first one in all probability was a replica of a famous icon which the Byzantine emperor John Tzimiskes took away as a expensive booty from the Bulgarian capital when he took over Preslav in 971. The second one discovered a short time ago represents an enthroned saint (Christ?). The throne is richly decorated and is called lyre-backed because of the peculiar form of its high back. Some authors look for the genesis of its form in the pagan epoch and in the images of Orpheus. With its exquisite line and in general with its style of drawing this icon is consonant with some of the remaining icons of the monastery studio and with these discovered at Patleyna and the Round church. It can only be regretted that it is not preserved as it came out from the hands of its creator in order to acknowledge him not only as a brilliant master of drawing but to evaluate his colouristic abilities as well. In connection with the subject elaborated by him it is interesting to point out the importance of a famous wall mosaic in the lunette over one of the entrances of St. Sophia's church in Constantinople, in which Christ is represented blessing and seated on a lyre-backed throne with two bust images flanking the throne and a figure of a Byzantine emperor at prayer. According to some the emperor is Leo VI the Wise (886-912), according to others - Basil I (867-886) and according to still others - Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (913-959). Taking into account that the painted ceramics in Preslav appeared in the late 9th century and their most active work took place during the initial three decades of the 10th century, it can be claimed not without reason that the model of the Preslav Christ enthroned from the studio of the Palace monastery was the famous mosaic of the Byzantine capital. With these examples the importance of Preslav as a first-rate centre of art ceramics during the 9th-10th century Southeastern Europe is even more conspicuous.

The activities of the monastery ceramists included also tiles with painted Greek and Cyrillic letters. While in these with Greek letters are clearly read the names of saints and martyrs of the calendar of the Orthodox church, it is hard to say anything particular about the character and contents of the Cyrillic texts because of the strongly fragmented state of the tiles. Unlike the familiar tiles of rectangular form filled entirely in with Cyrillic letters from the ceramic studio at the Round church, the full outlines of only several individual letters have survived. Painted with the same chocolate brown colour of the contour, with which the

painters-ceramists laid on the lines and the colouring of the ornamental motives and images, the text on the tiles included only capital (initial) letters of the solemn uncial used in the manuscripts of the age of King Symeon I. The confident and graceful outlines of the letters and their apt position against the natural pale rosy background of the tiles betrays the masterly hand and exquisite taste of remarkable ceramists who have created unique examples of world ceramic icon painting.

It seems that tiles of Cyrillic texts lined wall surfaces as a didactic device. The young students of the schools arranged at the Preslav monastery became acquainted from an early age with the beautiful outlines of the letters in order to create later artistically parchment manuscript rolls and codices at capital (palace and monastery) scriptoria. These painted texts on white clay tiles are in fact specimen characters with doubtless artistic qualities in every possible respect. This is quite natural because they are the result of mutual cooperation between members of the scriptorium and the ceramic studio in both parts of this remarkable monastery complex.

Built in two stages during the period spanning the late 9th and the first quarter of the 10th century, the complex wonderfully harmonizes with the character of the Manastira area, the fortress walls and defences, the imposing skylines of the ruler's palace, the slim proportions of the Preslav cross-in-dome churches. It is one of the most interesting and originally achieved accents in the urban architectural composition of the capital city of King Symeon I.

Because of its proximity to the palaces, enormous size, three-dimensional composition, richness of buildings and occupations of its inhabitants it is definitely justified to consider it a Palace monastery.

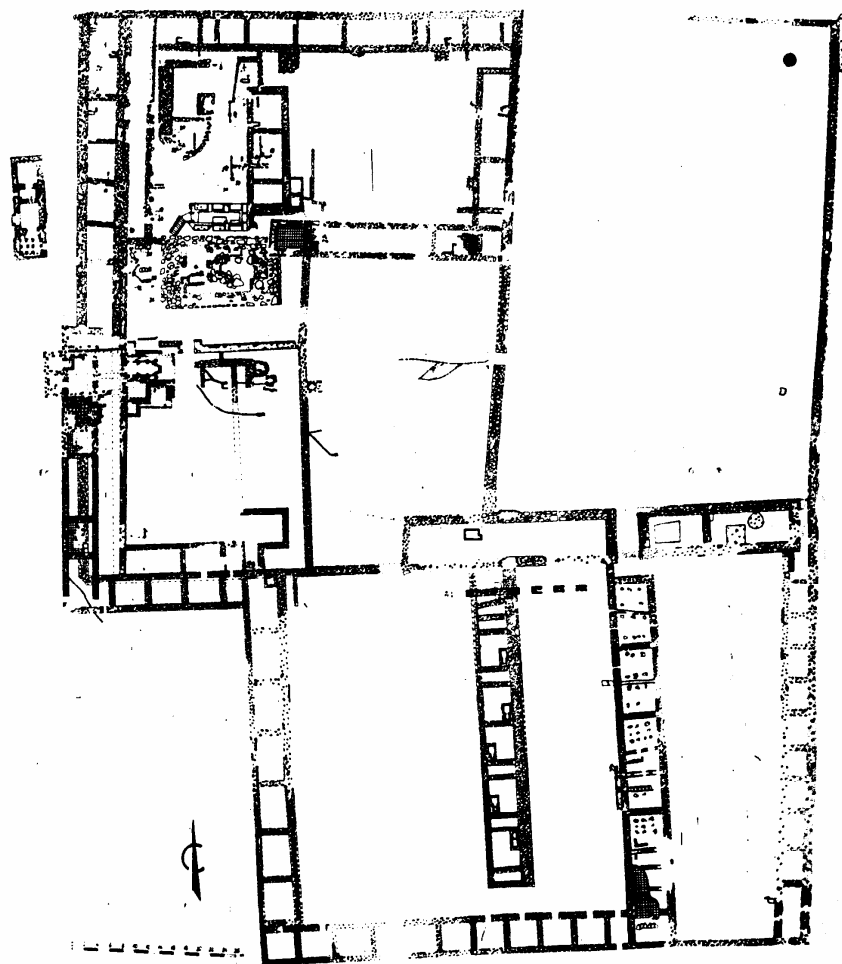
Like the monastery of Prince Boris I at the Great basilica in Pliska it had some representative state and church functions as well. The company of its active intellectual elite included not only writers, teachers and artists but also eminent clerics and hierarchs of the Bulgarian church.

The numerous materials from the excavations are connected with the type and function of the buildings in the life and daily routine of the monastery dwellers and they reflect the variety of their occupations. Duly considered and correctly explained, they elucidate not only the architecture of the monastery but its contribution to the formation of the Old Bulgarian material and spiritual culture during the 9th-10th century as well.

There is no other monument among those discovered in Preslav which, like the Palace one, has produced so many data and materials on the production base, ornamental wealth and style of the Preslav painted ceramics, applied sculpture, art bone carving, metalwork, glass making and a number of other craft and art technologies.

The hands of the copists and translators who worked in the Palace monastery produced a large amount of expensive and richly illustrated literary monuments. Today we are forced to assess their abilities as literary figures and illuminators by the later copies of their works kept beyond Bulgaria's boundaries and by the information provided by the monastery studio for painted ceramics.

In the light of archaeological excavations and investigations the Palace monastery complex distinguishes itself as one of the largest and important centres of the literary, didactic and artistic life of the first Bulgarian kingdom, of the versatile deeds and achievements of the Preslav civilisation.



ill. 1. Palace monastery - plan after its archeological excavation and investigation.